

High Street
Houghton Conquest
Bedfordshire MK45 3LL

Telephone: 01234 740202
Email: hconquest@hcschool.org.uk
Website: www.hcschool.org.uk



**Houghton Conquest
Lower School**

Growing together

Headteacher
Miss C A McCarthy

22nd May 2020

Dear Parent/Carers

Please read this letter in full as it includes important information about our prospective reopening of the pre-school.

Re: Reopening of Houghton Conquest Pre-School

From the week commencing 1st June at the earliest, the government are asking primary schools to welcome back children in some year groups, alongside the provision we are currently making. This is on the proviso that the 5 key tests set by government are met; we are likely to be informed as to whether these 5 conditions have been met on 28th/29th May. If the key conditions are not met, school will not be re-opening and I apologise now for the late notice and last-minute changes you may need to make.

Whilst the education and future of our children is of vital importance, our number one priority is to minimise any risks to children and staff onsite. This includes following all government guidance and guidelines including minimising in school movement, reducing group sizes, and ensuring social distancing measures are followed wherever possible. We cannot 100% guarantee that a child will always maintain a 2-metre distance from all pupils and staff in classrooms and during playtimes within their groups. Therefore, in cases where parents/carers feel their child is not ready, we support your decision to delay their return to school. By keeping children in small groups, we aim to minimise contact between children. However, within their own group, children will at times play or interact within a 1-metre range of each other and it is important that we recognise that this will happen. The decision to return your child to school is yours and we will support whatever decision you choose to make.

The purpose of this letter is to provide details of how we will manage this process should we be advised that we should open. We plan to open the school from **Tuesday 2nd June for pre-school, reception, and year 1**, as well as the **children of key workers and vulnerable children**. Staff will be undertaking additional staff training on Monday 1st June to ensure the school is fully operational in line with the new guidance, for when the children return on the Tuesday. However, we will be open for children of key workers and vulnerable children on the 1st June.



The preschool will only be operating morning sessions (including lunch) and will run between 9:30am and 1pm. This will allow the members of staff at pre-school to adequately prepare and clean all resources used by the children ready for the next day.

How will pre-school work now?

Drop Offs

Arrival at school will be staggered to maintain social distancing, where parents will be asked to form an orderly line leading up to one of three entrances for you to drop your child off. You will be able to choose between the courtyard gate (car park side), the side gate (home from home entrance) and the front garden gate (at the front of pre-school), where an adult will be waiting. This will help to prevent gathering of groups of people. We would appreciate that only one parent/carer drops off their child if possible. There will be no access to the pre-school building without a pre-arranged appointment; if you wish to book in a meeting or have any concerns/messages, please contact the school office in the first instance. **Any child that displays signs of distress or is upset will be asked to go home and return the following day.** We would appreciate your efforts in ensuring that you arrive at the time below rather than arriving early and waiting.

Drop off will be at the following time:

- **9.30am – Pre-School**
- **Priority Group children (key worker children and vulnerable children) within pre-school can arrive from 8.45am**

If you have children in multiple year groups, you may drop your child off at whichever time is most convenient for you. If you are late for your child's start time, we will require you to rearrange a new drop-off time with the pre-school directly.

Collection

Collection will be very similar to drop off in the morning; you will have the choice to arrive at one of the three entrances listed above, and a member of the pre-school team will escort your child to the gate and dismiss from here. It is very important that you arrive at the times below instead of arriving early and waiting.

Collection from pre-school will be at the following time:

- **1.00pm – Pre-School**
- **Priority Group children within pre-school will be able to stay until 3.15pm**

Structure

We will only be opening our pre-school to a group of 15 children. We aim to prioritise those children of key workers and those starting school in September to begin with, followed by those aged 4 then 3 then 2, in that order, on a first come first serve basis. Children within this group/"bubble" can choose which days best suit their family's needs.

There will be a strong focus on rebuilding social skills and supporting your child's emotional well-being. This includes activities that utilise our outdoor spaces, will balance nurture and structure and be predictable and organised with clearly stated expectations. Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible will be discussed in groups, with reviews planned to allow for changes in response to new developments.

Pre-School Layout

The pre-school will have all unnecessary furniture and soft furnishings removed from the room to create additional space. The number of resources children will be exposed to each day will be controlled and limited. The Government recognises that playing together is a vital part of Early Learning. Guidance states "because it is challenging to reduce contact between young children in the Early Years setting, regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, objects and toys, as well as hand washing are particularly important."

We have looked at the equipment we use and have selected only those toys which are most easily cleaned. We will limit the number of children playing at any activity at any time, but it must be recognised that EYFS children will be playing alongside their friends and sharing equipment and that cleaning and handwashing will be the key way that risk is minimised.

We will do all we can to encourage social distancing, including removing "spare" chairs from tables to discourage close proximity. However, we cannot guarantee that another child will not spontaneously touch or hug another child. By keeping children in small groups we aim to minimise this. By asking parents to be vigilant and ensure that children who display symptoms are not brought to school, we also hope that risks are minimised further. However, within their own "bubble" group, very young children, such as nursery and reception pupils and those in Year 1, will at times play or interact within a 1 metre range of each other and it is important that we recognise that this will happen.

It is recognised that young children and those with Special Educational Needs may not be able to understand the need for social distancing and may also seek close interaction with their peers or adults to provide reassurance. We will try to manage these risks by keeping children in small groups and trying, as far as possible, to keep the same pupils and staff members together from day to day. We have changed the physical layout of our pre-school to minimise contact and mixing. We will encourage children to clean their hands often, and we will regularly clean surfaces that are touched frequently. However, we cannot 100% guarantee that a child will maintain 2m distance at all times from all pupils and staff in the pre-school during sessions. Therefore, in cases where parents and carers feel their child is not ready, we support your decision to delay their return to pre-school.

Lunchtimes

All children will eat in the pre-school building in their allocated group and will not come to the main school building to limit the amount of people entering the main school building. In order to adhere to hygiene standards, all tables/desks will be wiped down using antibacterial cleaning materials before lunch. We **will not** be providing hot meals on site, nor will the children be eating in the main hall as this poses a number of challenges in terms of safely providing for the children. You may provide your child with a packed lunch or if you are

entitled to a Free School Meal Plan (FSM), we can provide your child with a cold packed lunch each day.

Expectations

Uniform

All children will be expected to wear either their pre-school polo shirt or a plain t-shirt and can alternate throughout the week. The expectation is that children will wear freshly cleaned clothes each day to minimise the risk of transmission of any potential molecules.

Your child will only need to bring a water bottle, their packed lunch (unless FSM) and a coat/sun hat (weather permitting). On entry to pre-school, your child will be expected to wash their hands immediately, place their packed lunch in an allocated area in the room, and put their coat on their peg and their water bottle in the tray. Children will not be allowed to bring in any additional toys during this time.

Hygiene

Ground rules focusing on how we can keep ourselves and each other as safe as possible will be discussed in class groups, with reviews planned to allow for changes in response to new developments. Pre-school will be equipped with the appropriate supplies to ensure that hygiene is paramount during this time. Staff will explicitly teach and supervise health and hygiene arrangements, including observing children's behaviour and encouraging them not to touch their faces.

Sickness

A child who has symptoms, or feels unwell in any way, should not be sent into school.

Children or staff who developed symptoms within school will be sent home. In this scenario, the individual with symptoms would need to be isolated, following government guidance and should be tested. The group that this individual is a part of will be informed and they may also require testing but at this stage would not need to isolate and can still come to school. If the individual with symptoms tests positive, all members of the group will be informed and isolate too. If the test is negative, the individual may return to school. The government have ensured test results are received within a couple of days.

Booking Allocated slots

I appreciate that these are difficult times and the decision whether to send your child back to pre-school is extremely difficult. It is important to us that we are honest and transparent with regard to our vision of how we can best support children and staff returning to pre-school safely, following the government guidelines.

It is our intention to monitor and review our provision on a daily and weekly basis. Should these evaluations suggest an issue that we cannot address then we may need to reduce this provision for the safety of staff and children. We will adhere to changing government guidelines when it is released.

We will be providing parents with a bi-weekly booking form to complete. This will inform us what days you would like your child to attend this setting. We will be keeping our numbers to

a maximum of 15 and this group will not change until government guidance allows. We will only offer sessions to the same 15 children; however, the days required may be different.

Please do understand by completing the attached form it does not guarantee you will get these sessions. We aim to prioritise those children of key workers and those starting school in September to begin with, followed by those aged 4 then 3 then 2, in that order, on a first come first serve basis.

We would like your responses **by 10am Friday 29th May**; this will give you an opportunity to listen to the Prime Minister's next key speech in order to inform your decision. We aim to inform you by the end of the day on **Friday 29th May** whether your child **will be attending** pre-school from **Tuesday 2nd June**.

If your child is new and has not currently started at the setting, we will defer this to September.

We support and understand your decision, whether you wish to send your child back to pre-school from Tuesday 2nd June, or not. This decision will not be held against you, and we will support you with continuing communication whilst they remain at home and activities to support your child.

Thank you for your continued support, and please rest assured that we are working as hard as possible to minimise risk and make the return to school as safe and successful as possible, following government guidelines. We have added a 'Closure' page to our school website, which has some useful information and links, and information on getting children ready to return to school. More information will be added to this page over time.

On the following pages, I have collated some Frequently Asked Questions from your survey feedback and the booking form. If you do have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

We hope you have a lovely half-term – enjoy the beautiful weather!

Yours sincerely



Miss J Heaslip
Acting Headteacher

Booking Form for Preschool

Please could you indicate below the sessions you require for the next two weeks, by completing the form below or emailing hcpreschool@hcschool.org.uk with the details required:

Child's Name: _____

Child's Age: _____

Is your child due to start school in September? YES NO

Is my child a Key worker child? YES NO

Please tick the appropriate boxes:

Week Commencing 1st June	Session 9:30am – 1:00pm	Week Commencing 8th June	Session 9:30am – 1:00pm
Monday	No sessions available	Monday	
Tuesday		Tuesday	
Wednesday		Wednesday	
Thursday		Thursday	
Friday		Friday	

There will be a further booking form published when appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have doubts about my child's ability to adhere to social distancing measures or keep him/herself clean and his/her hands away from his/her face.

It is recognised that young children and those with Special Educational Needs may not be able to understand the need for social distancing and may also seek close interaction with their peers or adults to provide reassurance. We will try to manage these risks by keeping children in small groups and trying, as far as possible, to keep the same pupils and staff members together from day to day. We will stagger playtimes so that different groups do not interact. We have changed the physical layout of our classrooms to minimise contact and mixing. We will encourage children to clean their hands often, and we will regularly clean surfaces that are touched frequently. However, we cannot 100% guarantee that a child will always maintain 2m distance from all pupils and staff in classrooms or during playtimes. Therefore, in cases where parents and carers feel their child is not ready, we support your decision to delay their return to school. All that we ask is that you continue to support your child's education at home.

Will children wear PPE? Will staff wear PPE?

Children will not be required to wear PPE. Whilst staff will not routinely wear PPE, there may be times when staff will wear PPE. Examples of this are when staff are providing intimate care such as when helping with toileting; where there needs to be very close contact such as treating a cut or graze; and where a child is unwell (either with a "normal" illness such as sickness, or is suspected of showing symptoms related to Covid-19). The PPE consists of plastic gloves, a plastic disposable apron and a face mask such as currently worn by some staff in supermarkets.

What if children touch or hug each other?

We will do all we can to encourage social distancing, including removing "spare" chairs from tables to discourage close proximity. However, we cannot guarantee that another child will not spontaneously touch or hug your child. By keeping children in small groups, we aim to minimise this. By asking parents to be vigilant and ensure that children who display symptoms are not brought to school, we also hope that risks are minimised further. However, within their own "bubble" group, very young children, such as nursery and reception pupils and those in Year 1, will at times play or interact within a 1 metre range of each other and it is important that we recognise that this will happen.

What if my child needs help? How can they socially distance from staff?

Staff cannot attend to a child if they are distressed or need first aid or intimate care and still maintain a distance of 2m. If a child comes up to a staff member and asks for help, it will be offered. We will do all we can to minimise our staff proximity to pupils, and this will be easier for pupils in Year 1 - but it is important that parents and carers realise this will happen from time to time.

How will the EYFS setting work now? Will children be playing in individual chalk squares? My child has missed their friends and will want to play with them.

The Government recognises that playing together is a vital part of Early Learning. Guidance states “because it is challenging to reduce contact between young children in the Early Years setting, regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, objects and toys, as well as hand washing are particularly important.” We have looked at the equipment we use and have selected only those toys which are most easily cleaned. We will limit the number of children playing at any activity at any time, but it must be recognised that EYFS children will be playing alongside their friends and sharing equipment and that cleaning and handwashing will be the key way that risk is minimised. We will not be introducing individual chalk squares into the play area for any year group.

I am a key worker and my child is not in the specified year groups. Can they still come to school?

Yes, any child of a key worker is still welcome in school, even if they are in Years 2-4. They will be part of a “bubble” group so that they continue to mix with the same group of children and are not interacting with other groups.